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SUBJECT: RWANDAN VIEWS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

REF: A. KIGALI 531
[1](#)B. KIGALI 740

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[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY: Many Rwandans are aware of the negative impacts of climate change on their country and are taking a proactive approach, both domestically and internationally, to mitigate against those impacts. The government of Rwanda (GOR) is aggressively promoting "clean and green" energy (Ref A), conservation and reforestation. Resources are limited and the challenges great. Rwanda supports the African common position on climate change, but sees this in terms of partnerships and investment. It would use "adaptation" funds to transform agriculture and help rebuild the country's degraded ecosystems. END SUMMARY.

Impact of Climate Change on Rwanda

[1](#)2. (U) A November 25 report by the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) on the economics of climate change in Rwanda indicates that climate change could cost the economy an estimated 1 percent of GDP annually by 2030. The impacts of climate change are cross-cutting and have affected agriculture, health, energy and degradation of eco-systems. The report estimates that the risk to the rural population from malaria could increase by 150 percent by 2050, adding an additional economic burden to the country.

[1](#)3. (U) The Director General of the Rwanda Environmental Management Authority (REMA) Dr. Rose Mukankomeje told dEtyOe:BL", early warning systems, introducing of crop species resistant to environmental stress, developing renewable and environmentally friendly energy sources and pursuing aggressive reforestation and afforestation programs.

Green and Clean Energy

[1](#)4. (U) On August 15-19, government officials told visiting EEB Senior Economic Advisor Joan Wadelton they are working to make Rwanda 100 percent "clean and green" by 2012 (Ref A). In addition to using methane from Lake Kivu as a new source of power, The GOR is aggressively seeking to develop the country's hydro electric and geothermal resources. Solar power and biogas are being introduced to rural areas, remote from the electrical grid. On October 28 the GOR approved a U.S. private sector-sponsored biofuels project in eastern Rwanda. Run by American-owned Eco-Fuel Global and British-owned Eco-Fuel Positive, the project will develop

jointly 10,000 hectares of marginal land for production of jatropha and build vegetable oil extraction facilities to process jatropha oil and jatropha seed cake (used as fertilizer). Eco-Fuel Global estimates the project will produce between 4-5 million gallons of biofuel annually (after eight years, when the jatropha trees reach full maturity), about 10 percent of Rwanda's current diesel consumption (Ref B).

Let's Plant some Trees

¶5. (U) In December 2009, the GOR will begin an extensive reforestation program to expand Gishwati forest in west-central Rwanda and connect it by a 50-kilometer tree-corridor to the 1,000 square kilometer Nyungwe forest to the south. Gishwati forest lost 99.4 percent of its forest cover between 1986 and 2001 and is now less than 1,200 hectares in size. The first phase of the project aims to relocate 100 farming families and reforest 400 hectares of farmland. Ultimately, up to 5,000 families will be affected by the reforestation project. (Note: In land-poor Rwanda, reforestation projects inevitably require massive, and unpopular, relocation of local farmers. End Note).

¶6. (U) Rwanda's national development plan, Vision 2020, calls for an increase in forest coverage of 3.5 percent by 2012 and another 20 percent by 2020. Last month the GOR dedicated umuganda (one day of national service per month required of

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all Rwandans) to "national tree planting week." According to Minister of Environment and Land (Minister of Environment and Natural Resources until December 2) Stanislas Kamanzi, the goal of the event was to plant up to 20 million trees on 18,000 hectares throughout the country.

What Rwanda Wants out of Copenhagen

¶7. (U) The GOR and Rwandan civil society support the "African common position" on climate change. Kamanzi told the press November 11 that Rwanda "believes the world should seriously embark on reducing green house gasses, adopt green technologies and other production practices that are environmentally friendly." However, rather than talking in terms of compensation, Kamanzi said the focus should be on cooperation and partnerships, in which polluting countries would help developing countries implement climate adaptation programs to cope with the negative impact of climate change. "The issue of compensation shouldn't be a condition. People have to go in a synergistic manner in making sure that this (climate change) is dealt with and avoid going into a blame game," he added.

¶8. (U) A November 25th declaration by the Rwanda Climate Change Network (a coalition of Rwandan civil society organizations) called for "transparent, representative, accountable and easy to access adaptation assistance, mitigation programs to support implementation of clean renewable energy and sustainable low carbon development, and financing and capacity building to support adaptation and mitigation programs.

COMMENT

¶9. (SBU) President Kagame set the stage for Rwanda's proactive stance on combating climate change in his public statements at the UN in September. Rwanda is not waiting for international assistance to begin to implement low carbon sustainable development. Projects in renewable energy and reforestation are well advanced. Rather, Rwanda seeks partners, both public and private, to help adapt its agriculture to climate change, invest in renewable energy, replant its forests and repair its environment. Still among the poorest countries in the world, Rwanda would benefit from more flexible assistance programs and active private sector

investment supported by OPIC, EXIM and USTDA (as in the case of Contour Global's methane and Eco-Fuel Global's biofuels). This could make the climate change challenge a win-win for Rwandan and American investors by encouraging more investment and mutually beneficial trade. END COMMENT.
SYMINGTON